



On The Run

Lessons Learned In A Maize Field

By Robin Steckley

On March 10 as I stood befuddled amid acres of maize, I said a quiet prayer that God in his kindness would direct me back to the lodge, as I was completely lost. Going out to run on the dirt roads of Malawi without my cell phone or GPS was more than a little foolish, but I am here to write about it, so my prayer was answered.

I was in Malawi with supporters of cbm as part of my job. Malawi is a small, land-locked country of 13 million people in southeast Africa. Approximately three million would be considered middle class or richer by their standards, and 10 million live on less than \$1.25 per day. There are approximately 156 doctors in this country of 13 million inhabitants. You do the math. It speaks for itself.

The truth is even if there were more doctors, most Malawi citizens could not afford medical care. For example, a mother who needs cataract surgery at a cost of \$33 would have to choose not to feed her family for a month.

And which of your children do you choose when you can only afford enough malaria medication for one?

Sadly I saw children with distended bellies and hair turning an odd shade of red from malnourishment, because their parents simply could give them nothing.

I came home both grateful and humble, and this year on April 25, when I line up to run in the Markham Stouffville Hospital Legacy 5k Run/Walk, that gratitude and humility will spur me on.

I am grateful for the doctors who care for you and me in currently overcrowded conditions as they wait for the expansion to become a reality at Markham Stouffville Hospital. I am grateful for the fact that, while lying on a gurney in the ER may not be entirely comfortable, I know we can get the care and attention we need without the added worry of insurmountable medical fees.

I am grateful that it does not cost me a month's salary to care for myself or my family, and I do not have to choose whether to feed my children or not. And I am grateful that when my family is ill I can get the medical care we need.

I am humbled because I was reminded that we should not take for granted all that we have, and believe I should

to do my part to ensure our hospital continues to be fully equipped and able to meet the demands of the growing community.

And I am humbled to realize that I can support our hospital by doing something that is relaxing and fun. I can be outside, running or walking beside neighbours and friends, enjoying spring. This too is a privilege that is not available to most of the people I met in Malawi.

On April 25, join me and run or walk in support of Markham Stouffville Hospital. This is our hospital and our community. For more information go to www.legacy5k.ca

There is one final thing I am grateful for. Our streets are signed and there are no fields of maize so I won't get lost!



Doctors Steve (foreground) and Ephriam assessed 246 patients on the day this photo was taken. Sharon Luck (second right), a cbm supporter from Richmond Hill, recorded names for them as they worked.



This 16 month old baby is blind and has cerebral palsy, probably as the result of three bouts of malaria. It is unlikely that his mother could afford the medication to treat him and he will never be able to walk, talk or see.

Robin Steckley photos



New Bakery Opens

Josie Dipietro (front left) owner of Casareccia Italian Bakery on Main St., which opened March 23, with staff members Josie L., Lucy, Teresa, Catherine, Lena and Maria.

Food Fest Winner

The winner of the *Stouffville Free Press* Food Fest was Rob McKenzie. He chose to spend his \$100 voucher at the Imperial Café, in the town office building at 37 Sandiford Drive.

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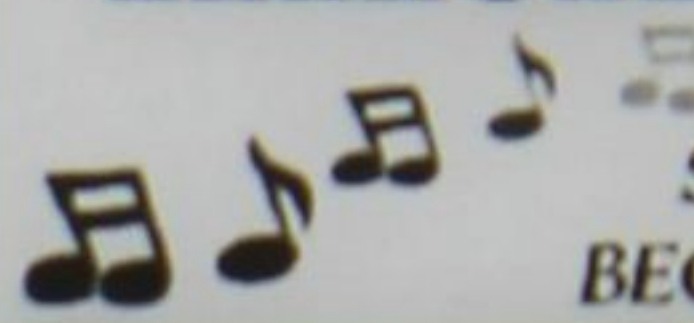
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